

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

Suffolk County intends to build a new baseball stadium in Central Islip. Senator Owen Johnson secured a \$14.4 million state grant for the county that was supposed to fund 100% of this new ballpark.

When ballpark proponents were initially "selling" this deal, county legislators and residents were told this project was not going to cost the taxpayers of Suffolk one penny. We were also told we could anticipate about \$500,000 in revenues from the ballpark which could go toward reducing the tax rate, not pay off a bond.

The final engineering reports have not even been secured, and bids have not been received. Yet Suffolk Legislator Joseph Caracappa,

## Before The First Shovel

who headed the ballpark project, is approaching the legislature with a request for an additional \$4.5 million. Before the first shovelful of dirt has been dug, this project is facing an overrun of \$4.5 million.

It is time that the legislature begins to think hard and fast about the whole ballpark concept. It might be best for the county to walk away from this now, before we are drawn into an endless pit of shortfalls and overruns.

Professional Minor League baseball, while a nice diversion, simply may not be worth the potential problems.

The refinancing of the Southwest Sewer District should provide a powerful reminder of this. Remember, that project was supposed to be completed for around \$100 million, and ended up costing over \$1 billion.

The Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant was estimated originally to cost \$250 million, that has cost the ratepayers somewhere between \$4.5 billion and \$6 billion, and still counting.

Don't we ever learn from history? When are we going to stop giving our

elected officials a blank check that is funded through higher taxes?

We said it once, and we are saying it again: We do not understand why sports team owners are exempt from having to finance their own infrastructures. They are already entitled to tax breaks and financing through Industrial Development Agency programs.

If a ballpark is such a good idea and such a good investment, the owners should do it themselves, and reap the potential profits or incur the risk, just like owners of other businesses.

And why not?

## Don't Taxes Ever Die?

A little less than 10 years ago, Suffolk County voters were asked to approve an additional quarter-percent sales tax increase, allegedly to be used for the preservation of ground water and the acquisition of open space.

As usual, the proponents argued that if we did not preserve the open space, we would run out of pure water and end up drinking our own sewage. The tax was expected to last 10 years, and sunset in the year 2000.

As the end of that sales tax rolls around, the legislature is considering asking the voters to extend this quarter-percent sales tax. A group of legislators wants to use half the revenue generated through the quarter-percent sales tax to once again bail out the Southwest Sewer District, a debt that never seems to retire.

To make sure this measure passes a legislative vote, these legislators have thrown in 25% of the revenues collected for unnamed environmental purposes, and 25% to stabilize real estate taxes. Our legislators forgot motherhood, apple pie and Santa

Claus.

Approving the extension of this quarter-percent sales tax will take \$600 million out of Suffolk County residents' pockets over the next 10 years. This is \$600 million that residents will not have for their families. If these projects have individual merit, and are popular with the public, then put them up as individual items to see if they have the support.

Over the last few years, as the economy has improved, we have watched with fear as taxes were added on top of taxes. We have lived through tax revolts and they are not pleasant. The economy may be good today, but if you are spending more than the rate of inflation, you are asking for an absolute disaster when our financial condition changes with the economic cycle, as it has in the past.

Government has an obligation to run itself efficiently and effectively, not just to tax and tax until the backs of the taxpayers are broken.

And why not?

## Parents' Choice Affirmed

The United States Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of the "Milwaukee Plan" which allows parents to select the school of choice for their children and requires that the city provide a voucher, or tax reduction receipt for the costs. Under the plan, parents are allowed to enroll their children in charter schools, and private or religious institutions.

The schooling and education of our children are the most important factors in their development. Bad schools, good schools and superior schools all exist. New York State parents have no choice but to send their children to public schools if they

have limited means, or simply cannot afford the tuition that charter and parochial schools charge. Public schools therefore have a monopoly. There is no competition, and the children suffer.

The New York State Legislature should thoroughly explore the Milwaukee model, and develop a program that meets the constitutional requirements for this state. The children will be the winners. Isn't that what education is all about?

We encourage you to contact your local state legislators, show your interest and ask for their involvement.

And why not?



## State Intervention Required

About 15,000 eastern Long Island residents received a Thank-you notice they did not need. Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and other insurance plans, will no longer be accepted at Southampton Hospital, Central Suffolk Hospital or Eastern Long Island Hospital.

The hospitals, operating under the Peconic Health Alliance, have been negotiating with Blue Cross/Blue Shield for increases in reimbursement for hospital charges. Blue Cross/Blue Shield has played hard ball.

The Alliance argues that because the hospitals are located on the East End of Long Island, a tourist mecca, they have to be ready to handle a four-fold increase in year-round population; therefore, they cannot downsize sufficiently after the season is over. Thus, the cost of operating the hospitals is much higher than in areas that have a steady population base.

Hospitals are unlike many area businesses because they must main-

tain highly specialized staff on a year-round basis.

If the patients are to lose coverage at these three hospitals, they may end up with no coverage. Most East End doctors do not have hospital privileges in the hospitals west of this area, and therefore would not be able to admit their patients to those western Suffolk hospitals. To have admitting privileges, most hospitals require physicians to live within a half-hour of the hospital, because they are called in for emergencies.

Governor George Pataki should become involved with this issue. He should order the state Superintendents of Insurance and Health to sit down with the Peconic Alliance and Blue Cross/Blue Shield, to hammer out an equitable agreement.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield must be brought to the realization that there are regional differences in the costs of medical care, and these variations must be addressed. The state's intervention is needed now.

And why not?



# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Only Sixteen Days To Christmas

With temperatures in the 60s, it seems like Christmas is far in the future. But, for a small group of dedicated volunteers who have been frantically working for the last four weeks to bring Christmas to children they do not know, it is a very short period of time.

"The Group's" mission is quite simple: help families who, this year, will not enjoy Christmas because of a personal tragedy they have experienced. It may be an accident, a loss of a job or a business, or husbands or wives struck by an illness for which they have no coverage. Sometimes it can be the worst possible scenario, an unexpected death that has left the family without the financial resources to carry on.

Little children never quite believe the severity of the problems. They still hope that if they write their letters to Santa, and send them off to the North Pole, miracles will happen. Mom and Dad have the unpleasant responsibility to tell the wee ones Santa can't come to their house this year. They say they understand, but they do not. They still hope, and pray, for a miracle.

This is where "The Group" comes in. We learn from churches, schools, friends and associates about those who have been tragically affected. We verify the authenticity of the needs, and secure the information concerning clothing sizes, the children's first names and ages.

Shoppers are sent off to acquire the needed goods. They shop long and hard to find the best values. During this process, their imaginations run wild. They create an image of the child, but do not know what background the child comes from. But these volunteers can see in their collective mind's eye these children opening the carefully wrapped gifts that have "come from Santa." They can see the joy of Christmas.

"The Group" operates under a credo

of total anonymity. Only a few know the names of the volunteers or the contributors. The names of the recipients are only known to a very few who make the phone calls. We go to great lengths to protect their privacy. In most cases, Santa's delivery agents come from a different part of the county than where the deliveries are being made, so the recipients won't run into these people and be able to make a connection.

"The Group" pools its own resources and assets, but depends heavily on the generosity of the residents of Suffolk County. Every year for the past 20 years, residents have overwhelmingly responded to our request for participation. It is through your generosity we are able to provide clothes, toys and other gifts to over 200 children.

Our reserves are running very low, and more families in need are coming in as the holiday approaches. If you would like to become a member of "The Group" by making a contribution, please do so as soon as possible.

"The Group" does not spend one cent on administration or promotional expenses. Every penny raised is spent on the children. Everything is done by volunteers. No one is paid a salary or a director's fee.

made their feelings known.

This sneaky attack on the taxpayer is reprehensible. Legislators have often voiced complaints that they are not respected. Pulling a disgraceful stunt like this gives the voters a reason to hold them in low esteem.

How are they going to say to the thousands of state employees, with a straight face, you have to live within inflation. In a position of leadership, one leads by example. It is a poor example that these legislators are demonstrating.

Governor Pataki has 10 days to either sign the legislation or veto it. That gives him until Sunday. He should not have to think twice. A veto would be the smart thing to do. The raise is too much, and, in the manner that it was done, it is a disgrace to the governmental system.

We encourage you to write or call Pataki, and ask him to vote "no" to their greed.

And why not?

We give of our time, our energy and our money, because we believe in our motto, "There but for the grace of God, go I."

None of us know when we will be in need, and we pray that someone will be there to help us. So, we are there to help

those who we do not know.

You may send your contributions to "The Group," c/o of Suffolk Life Newspapers, PO Box 9167, Riverhead, NY, 11901-9167.

And why not?



## Happy Hanukkah

Almost 2,150 years ago, the Syrians, who were part of the old Greek Empire, decided to eradicate the Jewish people. They sacked the Temple in Jerusalem and killed as many Jews as they could find.

In one small town, a leader of a family, Mattathias, who had five sons, decided to fight back through guerrilla actions. They fled to the hills and fought small battles. There came a day when they had recruited enough of an army to drive out the Syrians. They assaulted Jerusalem and reclaimed the Temple.

As the story goes, to purify the Temple, the Jews were required to burn oil for a period of eight days. There was only sufficient oil for one day. They prayed, and God granted them their wish. The oil lasted for eight days and the purification was completed. They fought valiantly for another

20 years and finally were able to enjoy 30 years of relative peace, as the Greek Empire gave way to the Romans.

On Sunday night, Jews around the world will commemorate this important period of their history. On December 13, they will light the Shamas (the center candle) and one candle on the Menorah. Each of the eight succeeding nights, they will light one additional candle working from right to left. This is a festive period. Families gather. Prayers are said. Stories are told.

To all our Jewish friends, we encourage you to hold a Hanukkah celebration. Keep alive the beliefs and the traditions of your religion; it helps give your children a sense of being, and a belief in God.

Happy Hanukkah!

And why not?

## Legislators Without Honor

The New York State Legislature recently voted itself a whopping 38% salary increase. The position of state legislator is a part-time job, and some legislators will make well over \$100,000 per year.

It is currently the fourth highest paid legislature in the nation, and, with the new salary hike, it will move up to second place in base salary. On top of the base salary, legislators receive stipends for serving on committees, and for travel and lodging.

This astronomical increase is bad enough, but the way the legislators gave themselves the raise is worse. They came back into special session to vote themselves this increase so it will take effect next month.

Under state law, salary increases cannot take place until the next fiscal year. The legislators did not have the guts to vote themselves this increase prior to the election, when the voters could have

## A Statement From The Publisher

I consider John Powell a personal friend, whom I have known for over 15 years. I was absolutely stunned to hear about the allegations of his wrongdoings, made on December 3, which were contained in a federal investigation. I did not want to believe it, and, until the allegations are proven, I won't.

In the many hours of discussion I have had with Powell over the years, he never once has given a hint he would allow himself to become involved in wrongdoing. Boastful, arrogant and some-

times self destructive he could be; but a common crook, a bribe taker, an associate of the mob? No way!

When all the facts come out, I pray that John will be proven innocent. Unfortunately, his name will be ruined, the name his father gave him with so much pride.

I will stand by John until he is proven guilty.

David J. Willmott  
Publisher



# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## 'The Group' Gets Swamped

Last week was overwhelming. In one day alone, 15 families in need came to "The Group's" attention. Over 50 kids had to be shopped for by volunteers.

Because of this surge of needy children, we are running out of time, energy and money. We had not anticipated this last-minute surge, but the

need is clearly there.

We are going to do our best to bring Christmas to these families who, under normal circumstances, have been able to provide Christmas on their own. This year, however, they cannot bring Christmas to their children because some tragedy has befallen them.

Please help us meet their needs by making a contribution. We are down to the wire and every dollar counts. Not one cent goes toward administrative costs. Every dollar is spent on clothes and toys for Suffolk County's needy children.

Become a member of "The Group," reach out and help us help them. Our

motto: "There but for the grace of God, Go I," fits well with the work we need your help to complete.

Please send your Christmas donations to "The Group," c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, P.O. Box 9167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

Thanks.  
And why not?

### Santa is a what?

I THINK SANTA CLAUS IS A WOMAN...

I hate to be the one to defy sacred myth, but I believe he's a she. Think about it. Christmas is a big, organized, warm, fuzzy, nurturing social deal, and I have a tough time believing a guy could possibly pull it all off!

For starters, the vast majority of men don't even think about selecting gifts until Christmas Eve. It's as if they are all frozen in some kind of Ebenezerian Time Warp until 3 p.m. on Dec. 24th, when they with amazing calm call other errand men and plan for a last-minute shopping spree.

Once at the mall, they always seem surprised to find only Ronco products, socket wrench sets, and mood rings left on the shelves. (You might think this would send them into a fit of panic and guilt, but my husband tells me it's an enormous relief because it lessens the 11th hour decision-making burden). On this count alone, I'm convinced Santa is a woman. Surely, if he were a man, everyone in the universe would wake up Christmas morning to find a rotating musical Chia Pet under the tree, still in the bag.

Another problem for a he-Santa would be getting there. First of all, there would be no reindeer because they would all be dead, gutted and strapped on to the rear bumper of the sleigh amid wide-eyed, desperate claims that buck season had been extended. Blitzen's rack would already be on the way to the taxidermist.

Even if the male Santa did have reindeer, he'd still have transportation problems because he would inevitably get lost up there in the snow and clouds and then refuse to stop and ask for directions.

Add to this the fact that there would be unavoidable delays in the chimney, where the Bob Vila-like Santa would stop to inspect and repoint bricks in the flue. He would also need to check for carbon monoxide fumes in every gas fireplace, and get under every Christmas tree that is crooked to straighten it to a perfectly upright 90-degree angle.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Other reasons why Santa can't possibly be a man:

- Men can't pack a bag.
- Men would rather be dead than caught wearing red velvet.
- Men would feel their masculinity is threatened...having to be seen with all those elves.
- Men don't answer their mail.
- Men would refuse to allow their physique to be described even in just as anything remotely resembling a "bowlful of jelly."
- Men aren't interested in stockings unless somebody's wearing them.
- Having to do the Ho Ho Ho thing would seriously inhibit their ability to pick up women.
- Finally, being responsible for Christmas would require a commitment.

I can buy the fact that other mythical holiday characters are men.....Father Time shows up once a year unshaven and looking ominous. Definite guy- Cupid flies around carrying weapons. Uncle Sam is a politician who likes to point fingers. Any one of these individuals could pass the testosterone screening test.

But not St. Nick. Not a chance. As long as we have each other, good will, peace on earth, faith and Nat King Cole's version of "The Christmas Song," it probably makes little difference what gender Santa is.

I just wish she'd quit dressing like a guy!!!

### Joy And Peace

May this New Year bring you joy and peace, with the courage to be true  
May it be a year of happiness, that sees you all year through  
May you seek to walk in honor, and to touch the heart of man  
May you spread your wings and fly

this year, may you learn you really can.  
May Encourager, be your name this year, and a strength to those in need  
May you help the helpless you may find, and may you plant a Godly seed  
May you heart grow so that all will see, you're a friend along the way  
May you give to those in comfort, may you bring them peace each day.  
May you shake the darkness from around, all those who live in fear  
May you have a ready shoulder, when they need to shed a tear  
May your heart be as deep as the deepest well, and compassion ever more  
May you help to heal the broken-hearted, may you help them fly and soar.  
May Christ in you shine so very bright, and your spirit grow so strong  
May it change the lives you touch each day, let it squelch the very storm  
May each day you live be for the Lord, and it help to change the earth  
May you never leave the promise, may you always speak His Birth  
May you go this year in confidence, of the love God has for you  
May you always tell the troubled, that his love is for them too  
May the victory of that wooden cross, forever break your fear  
May all that God has planned for you, may it all come through this year.  
Love was born in a manger  
Love came down from above  
In the form of a tiny boy child  
On the wings of a pure white dove  
Love was sent as a sacrifice  
Love to the heart of mankind  
It came to redeem us from all sin  
From above it calls us in kind

A tiny child with the power  
Of God wrapped in swaddling clothes  
Love was born in a manger  
It grew, lived, died, then arose  
Love goes on eternally giving  
From God and His Son from above  
So reach out and take what their giving the greatest of gifts  
It's Gods love

Anetta Pol  
Yaphank

### My Christmas Prayer

Let me extend my hand  
In giving, not receiving.  
Never let me lose the gift  
Of the magic of believing.

Let my ear and heart be open,  
When others to me may turn,  
With wisdom, and with love,  
So that we all may learn.

Remind me that it's better to smile.  
Rather, not to worry or frown.  
Renew me with ambition -  
When matters get me down.

If I should stray from this path,  
Guide me back to find the way.  
This is my poem for Christmas,  
And this is what I pray.

Carl J. Proia, Sr.

### Christmas Rush

Christmas is coming, and everyone's running, it's suddenly on us,  
It's practically here!

We're baking our baked goods, and lighting up our neighborhoods,  
And trimming our roof tops with sleighs and reindeer.

The children write Santa, (while we take Mylanta, when reading the lists they wish Santa to bring!)

We act hale and hearty while stressed out for a party,

With barely a thought for the birth of our King.

He was born in a stable, and if we had been able

Haven't we vowed we'd have let Mary in?

Three gifts were his treasures, (ours go beyond measures!)

Let's rejoice in our Savior, and let Christmas begin!

Away in a manger, in the barn of a stranger, The Christ Child came here to this planet for us!

So come let's adore him, let us praise and sing for him

Let us blow out the candles on a cake for Jesus!

Pete & Fran Morgan

## SUFFOLK LIFE NEWSPAPERS

and SUFFOLK COUNTY LIFE

Offices and plant located at Willmott Plaza, 1461 Old Country Road,  
(Route 58) Riverhead, N.Y. 516/369-0800  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9167, Riverhead, N.Y. 11901-9167

Suffolk Life is an official newspaper of the County of Suffolk, Surrogate Court, Town of Islip, Town of Southampton, Brentwood School District, Rocky Point School District, North Babylon School District. Suffolk County Life is an official newspaper of the Town of Islip, Town of Riverhead, Town of Brookhaven, Village of Port Jefferson.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:** We encourage our readers to express their views regardless of opinion through the Letters To The Editor column. Letters published represent the viewpoint of our readers. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Suffolk Life and, in fact, may be of opposite viewpoint. Letters must be limited to no more than 200 words, typed and double spaced and mailed to the editor's attention. We do not edit the contents of these communications. All letters must be signed and contain

an address and telephone number for verification. Although it is discouraged, we will withhold an author's name if the subject matter is sensitive or the writer may be subject to intimidation or harassment.

**NEWS & PHOTOGRAPHS:** Readers are welcome to submit ideas of interest and photographs for consideration of publication. All news and photographs become the property of Suffolk Life upon submission and cannot be returned for any reason. Please include daytime phone number for verification. **ERRORS:** Responsibility for errors in advertisements is limited to the value of the space occupied by the error.



## WILLMOTTS &amp; WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Taxpayer Strikeout

When it comes to the proposed minor league baseball stadium, the Suffolk County Legislature has struck out before anyone has even made it into the batter's box.

In 1995, State Senator Owen Johnson obtained a \$14.4 million state grant that was supposed to completely pay for the construction of a minor league baseball stadium for Suffolk County.

Before accepting the state grant, the county legislature conducted a study showing it would cost \$1.6 million to design and supervise the construction of the ballpark, \$2.1 million for land acquisition and \$10.7 million in actual construction costs.

This legislative report clearly stated the taxpayers of Suffolk would not have to pay one cent.

In October, the legislature claimed it had received four qualified proposals from minor league baseball team owners looking to establish a "home" in Suffolk.

The legislature's baseball committee, headed by Joe Caracappa, presented the entire legislature with a scenario promising the ballpark would not only cost Suffolk taxpayers nothing, but would actually provide \$459,000 in yearly revenues that would be used to reduce taxes.

A month later, Caracappa's committee came crawling back before the legislature crying about how Suffolk would not have a "state-of-the-art" ballpark unless the county's taxpayers invested another \$4.5 million.

Caracappa claims the initial plans for

the ballpark did not include enough restrooms, concession areas, spectator seats or commercial sky boxes. The county will be forced to pay for the security of the areas around the proposed site and for this additional cost. Meanwhile, the owners of the ball team have given nothing but the promise of an anticipated boost to the local economy.

What he neglected to mention is the fact that the county has yet to put the project out to bid, which means, prior to any building contract negotiations, the legislature scurried into the locker room before the game even started.

Who taught these turkeys how to play ball?

Having a state-of-the-art ballpark in Suffolk County is a great idea, and Johnson was creative enough to obtain the \$14.4 million to pay for it.

But quite frankly, we feel cheated. Our elected county officials are supposed to be looking out for the welfare of their constituents, and here they are giving away hot dogs, restrooms and sky boxes.

The Suffolk County Legislature has given the taxpayers a walloping Christmas present. It has once again given us the gift of failure.

If the team owners are serious about establishing a working relationship with the baseball fans and taxpayers of Suffolk County, they should be required to pick up any cost overrun or additional options to make the ballpark better than originally planned.

And why not?

## Annual Subscription Renewal Drive

Every year during January, we ask our readers of *Suffolk Life* to personally renew their subscriptions. You will find a form printed on the front page of this week's edition. Just fill it out and return it. If we are to be mailed as a periodical, the United States Post Office requires that over half our readers have to indicate they want the paper delivered.

This subscription form fulfills that requirement.

During January, we also ask our readers, who can, to voluntarily pay for their subscriptions at a rate of \$15 for the entire year. If you would like to contribute any other amount, it will be welcomed.

Postage costs over \$3 million a year to bring the paper into your home. Your voluntary subscription helps to cover some of this cost. Part of the funds raised are dedicated to the news department so that they can continue to bring you extensive coverage on stories like the LILCO-LIPA deal, and most recently, the series on the TWA Flight 800 report. Your subscription also helps provide space for community news and field reporters.

Each year, thousands of people respond to our drive. Some send letters telling us how *Suffolk Life* has touched their friends' or their family's lives. Others

tell us how important it is for the paper to be their watchdog. These notes of encouragement are gratifying and read by most of our staff. It helps them realize how important their jobs are, whether they are a reporter, a sales person, an artist, a press person or a clerk.

*Suffolk Life* is the only link every person in Suffolk County has to other communities. Every Wednesday, we are found in virtually every mailbox in the county. We love publishing the paper for you, and we hope you appreciate it.

Please take the time to fill out the subscription renewal form, and if you can, voluntarily pay for your subscription. As a bonus for you, if your subscription renewal is received by January 15, you will be eligible to win one of two weekend vacations at the wonderful Roseland Ranch. Winners will be announced on January 20 and January 27.

If your entry is received during January, you will automatically become eligible to win \$1,999 in cash, in honor of the new year. It doesn't cost you anything more than a postage stamp to enter the contest. Just fill out the form and mail to: 1999 Suffolk Life Subscription Drive, PO Box 9167, Riverhead, NY, 11901.

And why not?



## People of the Year

On our Letters page in this issue, you will find the list of nominees for the 1998 People Of The Year. These nominees, in one way or another, have reached out and touched others. They are the unsung heroes who rarely are recognized, but do so much to make Suffolk County a great place to live.

They are the people who find a need, and fulfill it. More than a few belong to organizations such as volunteer fire and ambulance services, while others help in schools and community organizations. Then there are the employees and employers who go that extra mile.

Each of them, in some way, has given unselfishly. They each have been

nominated by those who have been affected by them, or by neighbors, friends or associates.

The difficult part will now come in narrowing the list down to one winner in each category. These people will be announced in the January 13 issue. Each nominee deserves to be a winner, but not everyone can be. Just to be a nominee is an honor. Their lives are an example of what we all can aspire to.

To all those who submitted nominations, we thank you for your participation. To the nominees, we offer our heartiest congratulations. Look for the January 13 edition of *Suffolk Life* for 1998's "People Of The Year."

And why not?

## A Thank You, From 'The Group'

To those who contributed to "The Group," we give a large round of applause in appreciation. Your help is immeasurable.

Close your eyes for a moment, and envision Christmas morning in over 50 homes throughout Suffolk County, occupied by families who normally have the capability of taking care of their needs. This was their year over a barrel.

The circumstances vary: it could have been a loss of a home; a tragic automobile accident; a spouse who became unemployed because of health; or the worst tragedy of all, a death in the family resulting in a loss of income.

The stage has been set; the parents have told the wee ones that Santa may not be able to come this year, and if he does, it will only be a small present or two. As the kids are tucked into bed, and say their prayers, they hope, but they know to expect nothing.

When the kids are off to sleep, Mom and Dad start retrieving from the hide-away all the gifts and the goodies "The Group" has provided for the little ones.

Think about a modern Tiny Tim

opening up the big box and finding a brand new, warm winter jacket. He has outgrown his old one so it has lost its warmth. Next, our Tiny Tim finds the Tonka truck he has asked for. There is even a gift certificate for shoes. There are more packages than he can imagine.

Mom is excitedly telling the family that, with "The Group's" help, she has been able to buy the ingredients for a holiday feast.

Close to 200 children will experience the love and joy of Christmas. Every child is individually shopped for; their basic needs covered. The toys, books and games should help rid the home of the misery they have endured.

This will be the Christmas they will remember; and maybe, when they grow up, this example will prompt them to put out their hand to someone else and remind them that "There but for the grace of God, go I."

Thanks Suffolk County. Because you came through, so did we.

Love, "The Group."

And why not?